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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PRAGUE 000591

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MASS](#) [MARR](#) [EZ](#)
SUBJECT: FIRST MISSILE DEFENSE AGREEMENT NEGOTIATION IN
PRAGUE

Classified By: Ambassador Richard Graber
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C/NF) Summary: Assistant Secretary John Rood and an interagency delegation held productive negotiations on a ballistic missile defense agreement (BMDA) with representatives of the Czech Government in Prague on May 22. The Czechs see the BMDA as a much simpler agreement than the proposed Status of Forces Agreement supplemental (SOFA) that is also currently under negotiation. The text of the BMDA could be agreed sooner than the SOFA. While the Czechs make clear they did not have an official mandate to negotiate, they did provide constructive suggestions on the U.S. draft. The majority of proposed changes suggested by the Czech negotiators appeared designed for domestic political consumption, to maximize the likelihood of successful approval by the Czech Parliament. Reflecting the need to sell missile defense to domestic politicians, the Czechs reiterated that they could not host a radar base without the establishment of an interceptor site in Europe. The interceptors and radar allow them to argue that the U.S. missile defense system increases European as well as American security. The Czech Government remains critical of Russian interference in the European debate on missile defense, and believes that the Russian tendency to overplay their hand has made the way forward easier for our European allies. End Summary.

¶2. (C/NF) Assistant Secretary for International Security and Nonproliferation John C. Rood and an 11-member delegation met with Deputy Foreign Minister Tomas Pojar and an inter-ministerial delegation of the Czech Government in Prague on May 22 to open negotiations on a missile defense basing agreement (MDA). In addition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Czech side included representatives from the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of the Interior, and Ministry of Justice. The meetings took on a collaborative atmosphere, with a clear willingness on both sides to produce a good agreement without undue delay.

DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONCERNS DRIVE
CZECH NEGOTIATING POSITION

¶3. (C/NF) The Czech team was explicit that they hope to shape the agreement text to satisfy parliament and a skeptical public. In order to do so, they suggested including more detailed language in some areas with references to NATO agreements and how various arrangements would be implemented. While the U.S. delegation remarked that many of these details might be more appropriate as part of lower-level implementing arrangements, the Czechs responded that they need to include

many of these provisions in the main text so they would not "appear to have forgotten these issues."

¶4. (C/NF) The Czech delegation places a high priority on ensuring that the agreement includes a clear recognition of Czech sovereignty over its territory. For example, they again raised the possibility of charging a symbolic rent of one Czech Koruna per year for the base. In order to argue domestically that the radar would provide a net security gain for the Czech Republic, the Czech negotiating team asked that there be increased intelligence sharing on threats to the Czech Republic, not just threats to the missile defense facility.

A WARY EYE ON U.S. FUNDING FOR MISSILE DEFENSE

¶5. (C/NF) The Czech side showed some concern about proposals in Congress to cut some of the funding for missile defense. The Czech Government has taken a politically difficult path in choosing to volunteer to host missile defense assets. The public is widely skeptical about the plan, and a hung parliament means certain members of opposition parties have had a big incentive to use the issue to score political points. Some are already publicly arguing that the current Czech government is too pro-American and that it should stop all negotiation until the funding issue is resolved. (Note: Many such critics are the same individuals that oppose the base regardless of funding. End note) DFM Pojar hoped that sufficient funding will be allocated to allow both elements of the European site to go forward, and looked forward to the conclusion of the U.S. appropriations process. A/S Rood agreed, and assured the Czechs the administration is committed to missile defense and securing the necessary funding for the proposed assets in Europe, noting that a

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number of steps remain before a final funding level is determined.

A RADAR ALONE WILL NOT FLY

¶6. (C/NF) Reacting to press reports that the funding for the interceptor site in Poland is the subject of proposed cuts in Congress, DFM Pojar said the Czech and Polish missile defense elements must both go forward. Politically the Czechs could not/not sell an agreement to host a radar base without interceptors in Europe. The establishment of a radar base in the Czech Republic without an interceptor site in Europe would mean no increase in European security. Over dinner at the Residence, the Ambassador explained that funding cuts were not specific to the Polish site specifically, and reiterated the administration's commitment to retaining full funding.

MISSILE DEFENSE IS GOOD FOR NATO

¶7. (C/NF) The Czechs feel missile defense can only strengthen NATO, and linkages with a broader NATO missile defense framework remain important. A/S Rood agreed, and encouraged the Czechs to take a leadership role in NATO on this issue. DFM Pojar said that it would be very helpful if NATO Secretary General De Hoop Scheffer called the leader of the

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Czech Social Democrat opposition party before the Parliamentary vote on the eventual MDA and SOFA. Such a call had worked before (when the Czech Republic was about to join NATO), and statements by the SecGen that missile defense is good for NATO would pay dividends.

SOFA POSITION HARDENS

¶8. (C/NF) The Czechs strongly pressed their view that the SOFA currently under negotiation with the United States should only cover the proposed missile defense base, rather than all future U.S. military operations in the Czech

Republic. They asserted that Czech critics of the United States would portray the SOFA as the thin end of a U.S. wedge, with inevitable additional deployments of large numbers on U.S. forces in the future. Many politicians in the Parliament would oppose a SOFA that would give future Czech governments the right to accept more U.S. troops, without going back to the Parliament first. The Czech negotiating team cannot foresee successful passage of a broad SOFA supplemental and felt that the existing NATO SOFA is sufficient to cover occasional combined U.S. Czech training exercises. A/S Rood continued to discuss the advantages of a separate, broader SOFA.

MOSCOW'S MISCHIEF MAKING

19. (C/NF) In a wide ranging discussion at dinner, the Czech team shared their frustration at Russian interference in the European debate on missile defense. DFM Pojar and Deputy Defense Minister Martin Bartak shared their plans to go to Russia in June to get a first-hand look at Russian strategic facilities and missile defense simulations. Both believe that there is political benefit in Europe to be seen talking to the Russians, even as they maintain Moscow's concerns about missile defense are patently false. MFA Political Director Martin Povejsil observed that Europe and the United States continue to benefit from Russian errors. The Russian tendency to overplay its hand recently led to increased European and transatlantic unity in the face of Russian bluster. Povejsil maintained that Moscow clearly feels that Europe and the United States do not treat it with sufficient respect, and Putin's speech at Munich was an effective step at getting Europe focused on taking Russia seriously. However Russian missteps in the NATO Russia Council, at the NATO ministerial in Oslo, and at the failed EU-Russia summit, all showed that Russia had gone too far.

NEXT STEPS

10. (C/NF) The Czech team expects to get formal approval for negotiations soon. It hopes to present proposed revisions to both the BMDA and SOFA together at the end of June or early July. They also expressed interest in pursuing a BMD Framework Agreement that had been promised by Lt. Gen. Obering. They proposed the second round of meetings be held at the end of July, and were supportive of meetings either in Washington or Prague. A/S Rood reiterated the importance of the two agreements to the U.S., and asked if an earlier

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meeting would be possible. The Czechs agreed to give an update on the status of their counterproposal in June, possibly involving a June meeting in Washington. Both sides agreed to consult in mid June to finalize the time and location of the next round of negotiations.

COMMENT

11. (C/NF) Negotiations on the Missile Defense agreement were productive, demonstrating a clear interest in making missile defense a success. The Czechs will continue to act as key partners beyond these bilateral negotiations, acting both bilaterally and multilaterally to build support for missile defense in Europe.

12. (U) A/S Rood has cleared this cable.
GRABER